

Sunday drive takes on new meaning

Motorists 'share the road' with cyclists

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

Highway 3.

Motorists travelling on County Road 34 toward Cottam Sunday morning were forced to share the road with a procession of more than 70 cyclists.

Some of them rode traditional cycles built for speed, others pulled their kids in bike chariots and one coordinated fellow even made the trek on an old-time pennyfarthing.

It was all to raise awareness for the 2nd annual Share the Road Ride, organized by Kingsville bicycle-enthusiast Tom Omstead.

The riders made their way 20 kilometres from the Essex Civic Centre to downtown Cottam and back.

Omstead said the goal of the event was to raise awareness for motorists to share the road with cyclists.

Last year's event focused on the "bike unfriendly" Seacliff Drive in Leamington. It took place just hours after Leamington migrant worker Alberto Tableros was killed while riding his bicycle on

In the wake of the tragedy last October, Omstead has worked with Essex County Engineer Tom Bateman to erect signs along 20 kilometres of road in Leamington to remind motorists to share the road with cyclists.

Omstead has also drafted a petition signed by more than 1,300 supporters that he plans to present to local public officials in an effort to have more signs put up in the county.

He is planning on making a presentation to Kingsville town council in the near future to voice his concerns.

His ambitions go far beyond simply having motorists share the road. He is also advocating for a 200-kilometre bike trail system to be constructed across the county over the next 10 years.

After the ride to Cottam in drizzling rain and wind, Omstead said he was impressed with the way motorists shared the road with the group of cyclists.

"We've seen a lot of motorists who have given us leeway and that's what

we like to see," he said. "For us, the concept is sharing the road, not obstructing it."

Omstead sent a slew of emails throughout the county to a network of bicycle enthusiasts, asking them to participate in the event. Cyclists arrived from Essex, Kingsville, Wheatley, Leamington and Windsor to show their support.

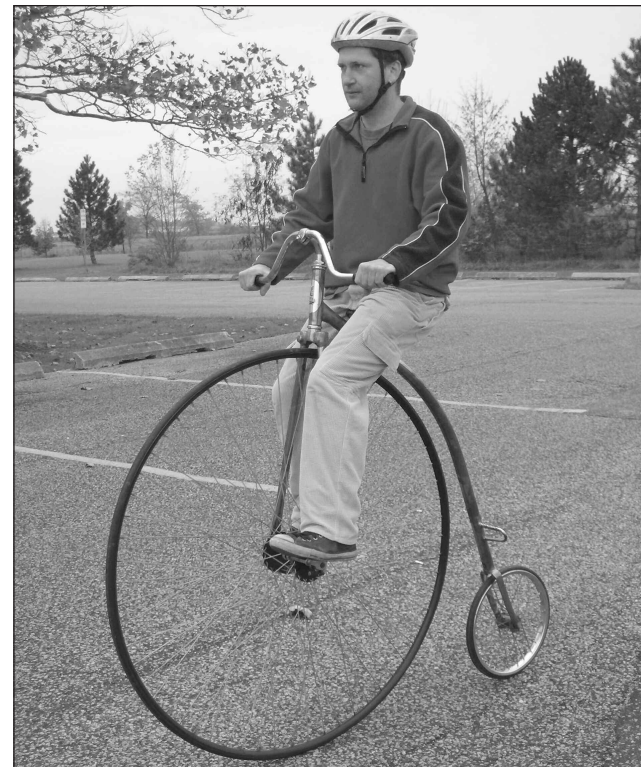
"The thing I find very interesting is the broad base of people we have here," said Omstead's wife Sue, who joined him for the ride. "We have everyone from families, grandparents, recreational and competitive riders."

Sue said compared to some other communities, Essex County falls short when it comes to promoting awareness on motorists sharing the road with cyclists.

One participating cyclist, Rob Renaud, who owns Bicycle World in Windsor, said events like Share the Road Ride help to change the mentality of motorists, who aren't used to sharing lanes with bikes.

Robert Parent, who owns Ambassador Bike Shop in LaSalle, said some roads in the county, such as County Road 34, have narrow shoulders that can make bike riding difficult.

At the end of the event, participant Tim Harrington won a draw for a Trek 4300 bike, donated by Dixie Lawn & Cycle in Leamington.



Rob Renaud, left, takes his replica of a pennyfarthing bicycle for a ride around the Essex Civic Centre Oct. 22. Renaud was one of more than 70 cyclists who participated in the 2nd annual Share the Road Ride event to promote awareness for cyclists' safety on busy county roads. Bicycle enthusiasts Sue and Tom Omstead, above, organized the event.

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